Mrs. Henson vs. Woman Suffrage

By LUCY CARY

In her article of June 18, Mrs. Henson likens herself to the brave Dutch boy, who saved the lowlands of Holland from inundation by keeping his hand in a break in the dike until help came; but a more apt illustration would be that of a little girl stationing herself on the seashore and attempting to sweep back the rush of the incoming tide with a small broom. It is a pretty safe prediction that, even though she succeeds in calling "our most cultured women" (evidently the suffragists do not rank in that class) to her aid, the combined sweep of all their brooms, both large and small, will not succeed in staying the great tide of new and expanded thought which is surging over the world, and of which the effort of women to obtain political freedom is but one evidence.

Before undertaking to stamp out the suffrage movement in Virginia, Mrs. Henson should inform herself more accurately on the subject which she attempts to handle. Among the errors contained in her article of June 18, the following are perhaps the most striking:

She states that there are four equal suffrage States. There are five. She omits Washington, where the women have done well with the ballot and justified the wisdom of conferring it upon them.

She also states that in California woman suffrage was defeated by popular vote. As it has never been put to the popular vote, this statement is palpably erroneous. The fact is, that an equal suffrage bill has recently been passed in the California Legislature, but does not go to the people for ratification or rejection until October, when the suffragists of California have good hope of its adoption. She neglects to mention that the Wisconsin Legislature has very lately passed a woman suffrage bill, which must go to the voters in the near future.

Mrs. Henson says: "The suffrage cause has been defeated in ten years 185 times," but she fails to note the significance of the fact that, in spite of repeated defeats, the movement surely, steadily and irresistibly grows. As a fair example of its progress, notice what has happened in Connecticut. Two years ago an equal suffrage bill introduced in the Legislature of that State received only two votes. In June, 1911, a similar bill received forty-nine votes. At this rate, the suffragists of Connecticut will soon turn defeat into victory.

Mrs. Henson tells us an anecdote about "Mary Johnson, Mary Still, Mary Yet," whose depravity, and that of her sister voters, in selling votes caused the men of New Jersey to withdraw the ballot from their women in 1776. She further says that the better class of women did not vote. Of course, they did not vote. Does she seriously intend to compare the women of 1776 with the women of today? Times have changed since then, and women have been forced to change with them. Let the 6,000,000 working women of these United States bear witness to that fact. In this connection, it may not be amiss to say that some of our male voters appear to be as depraved in the matter of selling votes as was the Mary of 1776—perhaps because of the pernicious example set by those same women voters of by-gone years.

The men of Norfolk county, however, have not yet been deprived of the ballot, though, from what has been published concerning some of the fraudulent elections held there, it is evident that Mary, Johnson-Still Yet will not lack for male society in that place where she has leisure to repent of her misdeeds.

It has been well said that every reform has three stages—ridicule, opposition, adoption. Measured by this rule, the equal suffrage movement in Virginia has made healthy and normal progress. Mrs. Henson herself bears this statement out, for she says that until now the movement has been laughed at as nothing; but, foreseeing the impending ruin, she is calling for help to sweep back the threatened inundation; she says that help will shortly come in the form of organized opposition. If she is a true prophet, we are about to enter upon our second stage. So be it! Let us enter and pass through this stage as quickly as may be, and the third will come in due course. At a conservative estimate, adoption will come within twenty-five years.

"The thoughts of men are widened
with the process of the suns,
And I doubt not through the ages one
increasing purpose runs."

The widening process is slow, sure and inevitable, full of beauty, majesty and hope, but also fraught with anxiety, pain and strife. Our little efforts cannot stay it for long, nor yet greatly hasten its majestic march, but let us be sure that we are throwing our influence on the right side, lest haply we be found to fight against the eternal principles of truth and justice.

You Can Love Truly and Often if You Have the Chance

BY ADA PATTERSON.

A former Postmaster-General of the United States, former postmaster of New York City and president of a National Bank has lifted up his voice to explode an aged theory. General Thomas L. James, of may years and honors, said on the occasion of his fourth wedding, that the theory that we can truly love but once in a lifetime, is "nonsense."

Well, isn't it? Don't speak before thinking, but think before speaking. Isn't it true? Draw on your personal experience, not on the maudlinisms of an old-fashioned novel. Persons who read the Fannie Burney and Jane Austen style of novels believe we love but once. But they also regret the tallow candle and sigh for our great-grandmother's days, when every house had its spinning wheel and every woman spun her own frocks. These are the persons who faint at mention of a co-operative kitchen and think any invention for washing dishes by machinery is a sin.

Read the general's argument and consider it before you try to answer it. He says love differs in kind, but not in degree.

"We care for people for what they are, and, as no two people are exactly alike, we do not feel in exactly the same way toward any two people. You cannot really compare affection. One might care for half a dozen persons, one as much as the other."

The general, a good American citizen and office holder, did not speak in a Turkish sense, nor yet in the spirit of a progressive divorcee. He makes no preposterous claim that a man can love two women truly at the same time.

He said: "I have never been divorced. My three former wives died." The general had, then, a clear title for his successive loves. Granted a clear conscience and a happy experience in previous loves, it is natural and to be expected that a man should love and love again, and that a woman have the same right and the same inclination.

We can all remember, if we have lived in small communities, where the interest in personal affairs is always acute, that there was always in the remarriage of a widow or a widower, some suggestion to the curious lookers-on of disloyalty to the one who had gone before.

In this less sentimental and more charitable period, we regard a second marriage, if not too speedily contracted, as a certificate of good character to the deceased spouse.

We know that with the taste for weepy novels has passed the expectance of continuous weed wearing. The twentieth century is one in which wholesome common sense has succeeded sentiment. A bride gave evidence of this in her farewells to one of her guests, an intimate friend, who helped her to slip out of the clinging white satin of her wedding into the gray cloth of her going-away gown. She had married a widower, and she was talking of their future home.

"Frank thought I might like to have a new home. He offered to build a house farther up town. But I told him the old one was more convenient to his business, and he was used to it and I didn't mind. Would you?"

Would any woman who had a head set squarely on her shoulders and a heart in her bosom? Don't discount the heart in a matter of understanding. It is a great aid in difficult situations and a skilful interpreter of difficult persons.

I saw the bride next at a dinner the pair gave to a few friends when they had returned from their honeymoon wanderings. She led us through the old home. When we stopped in the library, before the fireplace, filled with the summer garniture of fragrant green boughs, we glanced at the portrait of a sweet, womanly face above the mantel. The eyes of the bride followed ours. They rested with a glance as kindly interested upon the picture.

"My husband's first wife," she said, simply, and the tour of the rooms continued. When the other guests had gone, the bride spoke, as she had done after her wedding, of a subject which we both understood she was now dismissing for all time from tongue and mind.

"I am here in the house which my husband occupied with his former wife, but I have never had a moment's unhappiness because of it. He asked me, whether I would prefer that her portrait should be packed away, and I said 'no.' I like to look at that portrait. It was taken shortly before her death. You can see that it is the picture of a happy woman. If a woman has a happy face, I know she has a good husband. I believe that the man who has been an honorable husband to his first wife will be the same to his second. I am not so ignoble nor so silly as to be jealous of a dead woman. My husband never speaks of her, but if he ever does I am sure I shall not mind. She is a beautiful memory, but she is dead. I am a presence and alive."

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Count Leo Tolstoy as He Really Was

By BERNARD SHAW.

Tolstoy was a man of genius in the very first flight of that rare species. He had the penetrating common sense characteristic of that first flight. And yet no English old maid of county family, living in a cathedral town on 300 pounds a year, could have made more absurd attempts to start an ideal social system by private misconduct than he. He put on his dress of moujik exactly as Don Quixote put on a suit of armor. He tried to ignore money as Don Quixote did. He left his own skilled work to build houses that could hardly be induced to stand, and to make boots that any army contractor would have been ashamed of. He let his property drift to the verge of insolvency and ruin like the laziest Irish squire, because he disapproved of property as an institution. And he was neither honest nor respectable in his follies.

He connived at all sorts of invasions. He would not take money on a journey; but he would take a companion who would buy railroad tickets and pay hotel bills behind his back. He would not own property or copyrights; but he would make them over to his wife and children, and live in their country house in Yasnaya and their town house in Moscow very comfortably, only occasionally easing his conscience by making things as difficult and unpleasant for them as possible. He insisted on celibacy as the first condition of a worthy life; and his wife became sixteen times a mother, and found him an uxorious husband at seventy.

In the ordinary affairs of life, he shirked every uncongenial responsibility whilst availing himself of every luxury he really cared for. And he railed at his wife and family for enabling him to do it, treating his wife as ethically inferior because she insisted on saving the family from ruin, until at last she gave him up as impossible and managed for him without saying anything harsher than her Russian formula "Nothing matters so long as the baby is not crying."

Probably many of Tolstoy's admirers dismissed these facts during his lifetime as silly legends invented by people who did not understand him. But it seems clear now that they were quite true. Not, of course, that Tolstoy was fact proof. He soon found out by experience that his follies were tiresome; and he never did anything when he was once tired of it, though he did not always cease to recommend others to do it. But one is none the less left asking why he did not foresee the inevitable breakdown of his attempts to behave like a disciple of Jerusalem 1900 years ago. I am tempted to answer that he never foresaw anything, and learned what he did learn through the simple process of knocking his head against it.

The reader may here lose patience and say that if I have nothing more sensible to say than that Tolstoy was a fool, I had better drop the subject and leave this essay to more competent hands. Others may say that we all learn things by knocking our heads against them. Others, again, may say that Tolstoy had been through all ordinary reasoning and come out on the other side of it with the knowledge that we can only extend the range of possibility in human conduct, as in other things, by continually attempting the impossible. I have said all these things to myself. But take a single incident from his life. Tolstoy writes the "Kreutzer Conata." It is suggested that it should be read to the family and their guests at Yasnaya. Tolstoy, assenting, hands the manuscript to a gentleman to read. The gentleman begins confidently; presently grows doubtful; finally tells the countess that he really cannot go on reading in the presence of the younger girls. Tolstoy on being asked whether the book is fit for their ears, replies calmly that they had better go to bed, which they do before reading is resumed.

Now, to say that Tolstoy could not have foreseen this, is to say that he had not intelligence enough to know, that if he went out into the rain without an umbrella, he would get wet. Yet it is clear from the narrative that he did not foresee it, and this must mean that he was so continually pre-occupied with his ideas and his imagination that he seldom gave his mind to more immediate practical considerations—including the consideration of other people's feelings and convenience—until his neglect produced its inevitable consequences.

No wonder the countess was often near the end of her patience! Indeed there is one occasion recorded when Tolstoy's pre-occupation with his own conscience carried him into inhuman callousness. His trick of suddenly leaving the house and declaring he could no longer endure to live in such a fashion has been brought into prominence by his death on one of these occasions. He was a man who was boundlessly sympathetic on paper with imaginary beings, but outrageously inconsiderate to real people in his own home.

When we go to ask why people stood all this from him, the reply must be partly that the countess did not stand it, but took in her own hands the affairs he neglected, besides giving him pieces of her mind on occasion. She must be a woman of remarkable strength of character to have borne her burden without breaking down completely. If it be true that the effects of the strain on her had their share in the circumstances of that final flight from Yasnaya which ended in Tolstoy's death, no one can blame her.

So much for that part of the social burden which Tolstoy flatly refused to shoulder. After all, we cannot quarrel very deeply with him for his refusal; if a man does more than his share of extraordinary work for the world, we can hardly complain because he refused to do the ordinary tasks which society offers him, and which are calculated for quite another sort of a man. But it must be said that his own peculiar work would have been much better done in some respects if he had managed his estates and administered and exploited his copyrights instead of leaving all this drudgery to his wife.

It ended in his wife knowing a great deal more, in some respects, than he did of men and affairs, and in his using his powers and influence to set men on impracticable and mischievous enterprises. No doubt these had their value, but one does not know whether Tolstoy remained in a condition of invincible ignorance (for he went on giving the bad advice just as if it had worked perfectly) or whether he simply would not take the trouble to change his mind. He was most unfortunately incapable of laughing at himself, though he had a keen sense of the irony of wasted philanthropy—for example whilst he was organizing famine relief he ridiculed the whole business steadily, all through, as a ghastly futility. Yet, when a Tolstoyan colony was making itself a spectacle for gods and men, not by organizing relief for starving people, but by reducing well-fed ones to destitution, his irony was never aroused—he persuaded himself, and sometimes even persuaded the colonists, that all that was wrong was that they had not been quite foolish enough.

On the whole, we must conclude that it was a grave and incurable defect in Tolstoy's training that he had never been obliged to do a real job of real work, and do it for his living. His spell of soldiering was of no use to him in that way—a man learns nothing of affairs from being cooped up in a battery and fed like an artillery horse whilst he fires cannons at the French and English and is fired at by them.

Will Teach in John Marshall High School

MISS LENA REEKS, OF BOYDTON.

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]

Appomattox, Va., July 8.—Miss ...eeks, of Boydton, has resigned her ...on as assistant principal of the ...hattox High School, and becomes ...ics in the John Marshall High ...orange, Richmond. Miss Reeks is ...ice col... ate of the Woman's College, of Lynchburg, where she has a host of friends. She has been very successful as a teacher and is very popularly socially, both in Richmond and Lynchburg, as well as in Appomattox and Boydton. Miss Reeks becomes instructor in mathematics at John Marshall High School for the next session.

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